

DATE OF MEETING June 19, 2023

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SUBJECT **STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES' SERVICES PROGRAM SUMMARY**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report:

To provide Council with a summary of initiatives funded under Round One and Round Two of the Strengthening Communities' Services Program.

BACKGROUND

The Strengthening Communities' Services Program (SCSP) is a shared funding program provided by the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic to support unsheltered populations and to address related community impacts.

The City of Nanaimo was awarded funds in 2021 (Round One) and in 2022 (Round Two). The Round One funding cycle is September 2021 to 2023-JUL-31, and the Round Two funding cycle is August 2022 to 2023-AUG-31. There are no anticipated announcements for additional funding opportunities under the SCSP program.

DISCUSSION

SCSP Round One - \$2.5 million

The City of Nanaimo received \$2.5 million from Round One in 2021. With this funding, the City funded a shower program; downtown clean up and security programs; portable toilets in key locations; as well as, supporting a government-to-government partnership with Snuneymuxw First Nation for temporary and scattered site housing. Round One funds also assisted with operating costs and culturally appropriate program delivery for participants in the temporary and scattered site housing as well as homelessness outreach services.

Round One Summary (September 2021 – 2023-JUL-31)

- ***Shower Program - \$89,000:*** The shower program offers showers to unhoused or precariously housed individuals five days per week. The shower program also serves as a place where service providers can connect with those needing additional health and social support services. In 2018, the Unitarian Shelter and the City implemented a one-year shower program to supplement the lack of shower and hygiene services available through local service providers. Due to the ongoing lack of shower and hygiene services available, the City has continued to fund the program. The SCSP funds allowed the City to recover a portion of 2020 costs, 2021 costs and the first six months of costs in 2022 for the shower program. For 2023, funds have been allocated from the Housing Legacy Reserve to provide continued support. A review of the shower program along with the

feasibility of the program's expansion to other locations in the City will be presented to Council in summer 2023. Between September 2021 and December 2022, an average of 547 showers were provided monthly to unhoused or precariously housed individuals.

- Urban Clean-up Program - \$96,000: Between 2017 and 2022, the City funded an urban clean-up program operated by the Nanaimo John Howard Society. The program provided cleaning services in the downtown core including needle pick-up and employment opportunities to individuals transitioning out of homelessness, addiction or correctional settings. The SCSP funds allowed the City to recover a portion of 2020 costs, and 100% of costs for 2021 and 2022 for the urban clean-up program. The program ended in December 2022 by request of the operator due to other more desirable employment programs for clients, and the inability to address the increase of large volumes of debris requiring vehicle transportation for removal.
- Community Connect - \$143,200: The Community Connect program was a pilot offering security services in the Old City Quarter to deal with a high concentration of social challenges. The pilot was a partnership between City's Bylaw Enforcement section, RCMP, and the Old City Quarter Health and Safety Alliance. The SCSP funds allowed recovery of the City's share of the cost of the pilot program. The program ended in June 2021.
- Security Services - \$400,000: SCSP funds provided additional supports to the downtown area between September 2021 to 2023-JUL-31, by increasing evening and nighttime security presence to reduce community concerns around the impact of the opioid, mental health, and homelessness crisis. In addition, funds were used to provide cleaning supports to the downtown area.
- Portable Toilets - \$ 77,250: The City was able to provide additional access to washroom facilities and hygiene when there was limited access to public washrooms due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Three portable toilets were placed in locations in the downtown core where people were struggling to access washroom facilities. The funds for the portable toilets will end on 2023-JUN-30.
- Temporary Housing Units - \$970,000: In partnership with Snuneymuxw First Nation (SFN), the City was able to fund the purchase of three fourplex modulars located on SFN reserve lands. Each modular contains four individual living units, with their own bathroom, shower, and a mini kitchenette. The SCSP funds also allowed for the purchase of furniture and other soft costs to ensure that program participants had the supplies and supports they need to stabilize. Since December 2022, three participants transitioned from the modular units into permanent housing and other participants have been able to find employment after stabilizing in the temporary housing units. These fourplex modulars will continue to be utilized by SFN to house community members experiencing homelessness after the grant funding ends.
- Scattered Site Housing - \$103,000: Six temporary scattered site-housing units were supported in partnership with SFN for unhoused SFN community members needing financial and social supports. For this program, scattered site housing was in the form of RV Trailers. SCSP funds supported pad rentals for the units as well as utility costs.

- *Housing Supports and Services - \$596,550:* Culturally safe, person centred, and trauma informed wraparound supports are provided by SFN staff to participants accessing the temporary housing units and the scattered-site units. In addition, SFN staff work to support participants to transition into more permanent housing options and connect them to health and social support services. SFN is working on sustaining the housing supports and services staff for the housing units through alternative funding sources.
- *Cultural Services - \$25,000:* Services and training was provided by SFN to the City's Community Safety Officers (CSOs) and other frontline workers to ensure that supports and services offered to vulnerable populations are culturally safe and trauma informed.

SCSP Round Two - \$625,000

The City received \$625,000 from Round Two in 2022. With this round of funding, the City funded a breakfast meal program, extreme weather programs and supports, a second patrol vehicle for the community policing volunteer program, and ongoing government-to-government initiatives with SFN to strengthen their capacity to provide additional outreach supports to members of their Nation who experience homelessness.

Round Two Summary (August 2022 – 2023-AUG-31)

- *Food Security and Breakfast Program - \$221,000:* For many years, the 7-10 Club Society has operated a regular breakfast program in Nanaimo for vulnerable populations. However, since the closure of a City-owned location rented by the 7-10 Club Society in 2021 (to make way for permanent supportive housing), the organization has not re-established in another location. To bridge the gap in service until another alternative solution was identified, the City funded the Salvation Army to provide an indoor breakfast program between September and December 2021 from the previously allocated daytime resource centre budget. With SCSP funds, a contract was issued to the Salvation Army between November 2022 and August 2023 to provide a breakfast meal program. Due to structural issues in the Salvation Army's dining hall building at 19 Nicol Street, the breakfast program moved to a distributed model at the end of December 2022. Pending a more suitable solution, meals were temporarily provided through the Salvation Army's food truck located on Victoria Road. Starting in May 2023 meals are being prepared by the Salvation Army in a commercial kitchen off site and 7-10 Club Society staff distribute the breakfast meals seven days per week between 8 a.m. and 12 p.m. each day at two locations, 110 Wall Street and 250 Albert Street. Moving to the distributed model has increased staffing and operational costs and SCSP funds for the breakfast program will end 2023-JUL-09.
- *Extreme Weather Shelter and Supports Programs - \$299,300:* The City worked in partnership with various community organizations to provide warming and cooling support services during extreme weather events in 2022/2023. Between December 2022 and March 2023, with SCSP funds, the City funded two general daytime warming centres operated by Risebridge Society and the 7-10 Club Society. On average, over 100 individuals were served daily through the general daytime warming centre between December 2022 and March 2023. In addition, through the SCSP funds, the Unitarian Shelter provided an extreme weather daytime shelter for their shelter guests between December 2022 and March 2023. Approximately \$35,000 of SCSP funds are remaining and available to support community partners in providing heat relief services over the 2023 summer season. Based on input from service providers, amounts between \$2,000 and \$3,000 will be made available to

community partners who express interest in purchasing heat relief supplies to distribute within existing outreach programs and services. Examples of heat relief supplies includes water bottles, sunscreen, hats, personal misters, cooling towels, and shade tents. In addition, Staff are exploring new locations to install water stations that will provide more drinking water and misting options for cooling throughout the City.

- *Snuneymuxw Hulit Lelum's Homeless Outreach Team Support – \$78,900:* Between September 2022 and August 2023, SFN is able to increase access and capacity to service connect and transport Snuneymuxw community members experiencing homelessness to housing, health and social support services. Between September 2022 and March 2023, prevention services were provided to 65 individuals to prevent them from becoming homeless and 498 individuals were provided access to basic need supports and services. SFN will continue to operate the outreach program with alternative funding sources.
- *Community Policing Volunteer Support - \$25,800:* SCSP funds were used to lease a second patrol vehicle for one year to enhance the Crime Watch program provided by the Community Policing Volunteer program. The Community Policing Volunteer program is a joint effort between the City and the Nanaimo RCMP to help promote community safety in Nanaimo neighbourhoods hardest hit by the impacts of homelessness, social disorder, and crime. The Crime Watch program dispatches volunteers in vehicles to patrol neighborhoods to provide enhanced safety by operating as extra 'eyes and ears' for the neighbourhood. Volunteers report suspicious or criminal activity to police, bylaw, or sanitation services. In addition, they provide outreach and navigational support to unsheltered populations by providing drinking water, socks, gloves, and toques during extreme weather. The volunteers also provide safety information to neighbourhood residents about who to call, where to go for help, and what support services may be available. |

CONCLUSION

With the SCSP funds, the City has been able to build capacity and increase resources for initiatives that directly supported the health and safety of unsheltered homeless people and those who are impacted by homelessness. Services and initiatives offered by the City through the SCSP funds also supported efforts to reduce the COVID-19 Pandemic impacts on Nanaimo's unsheltered population. |

SUMMARY POINTS

- In Round One, the City received \$2.5 million to fund a shower program, downtown clean up and security programs, portable toilets, and a partnership with Snuneymuxw First Nation for capital and operational supports for temporary and scattered-site housing.
- In Round Two, the City received \$625,000 to fund a breakfast meal program, extreme weather programs and supports, a second patrol vehicle for the community policing volunteer program, and ongoing partnership with Snuneymuxw First Nation to strengthen capacity and provide additional outreach supports for unhoused Snuneymuxw community members.
- Strengthening Communities' Services Program funding for Round One ends 2023-JUL-31, and funding for Round Two ends 2023-AUG-31.

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